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Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 6, 2003

Mr. John Iani, Regional Director
U.S. EPA, Region 10
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear John:

We are writing to express our support for the collaborative process that was recently begun by local citizens through their local elected representatives to address potential human health concerns on Lake Roosevelt.

We understand that you are in the process of evaluating the impact of historic mining and related activities on the Upper Columbia River. The area you are studying is enormous, extending from Grand Coulee Dam to the Canadian border, a distance of over 150 road miles and over 600 miles of shoreline. We are aware of the difficult situation that Lake Roosevelt poses for you. We have been very impressed with EPA's willingness to try new approaches to difficult problems and applaud your efforts in calling for collaborative processes to resolve cleanup issues at the local level, before entering the litigious Superfund process. There is great advantage to a more cooperative and solution-based process with local involvement from the beginning.

The Eastern Washington Council of Governments was created in response to the need for a local, collaborative effort to come up with an innovative and promising approach for an alternative before resorting to the Superfund process. The Council is currently comprised of the commissioners of seven rural Eastern Washington counties that adjoin or are close to Lake Roosevelt. This group of commissioners represent the combined population of over 218,000 citizens, including tribal members, as well as over 27% of the land mass of Washington State. More recently, they have enlisted the support of other counties downstream of Grand Coulee Dam.

We understand that the Council of Governments invited Teck Cominco to the table to talk about possible alternatives and to address the immediate questions of human health concerns. As a result of this impressive local effort, Teck Cominco has agreed to fund comprehensive health and ecological risk assessments in compliance with the standards of the National Contingency Plan, and be subject to EPA's oversight and enforcement authority.

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Superfund listing of Lake Roosevelt would significantly delay any meaningful action on the ground. This is why we believe that studies proposed by the Eastern Washington Council of Governments should go forward and a listing decision should be deferred until the results are known. We understand that EPA would still retain the authority to take enforcement action if Teck Cominco fails to live up to its commitments.

We urge you to support this impressive local collaborative effort to evaluate the health of the Columbia River.

Best regards.

Cordially,



George R. Nethercutt, Jr.
Member of Congress



Jennifer Dunn
Member of Congress



Doc Hastings
Member of Congress

GEORGE R. NETHERCUTT, JR.
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